

TOWN OF DAVIE TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

TO: Mayor Judy Paul and Councilmembers

FROM/PHONE: Susan Starkey/954-797-1030

PREPARED BY: Susan Starkey/Councilwoman

SUBJECT: Resolution

AFFECTED DISTRICT: 3

ITEM REQUEST: Schedule for Council Meeting

TITLE OF AGENDA ITEM: OWL PARK - A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF "OWLS LOOKOUT PARK," AN OWL NATURE PRESERVE, LOCATED ON AN EXISTING OPEN SPACE PARCEL OWNED BY THE TOWN OF DAVIE; AND PROVIDING FOR AUTHORIZATION OF THE EXPENDITURE OF DISTRICT 3 OPEN SPACE FUNDING FOR THE INSTALLATION OF PERIMETER FENCING ON THE TWO PARCELS LOCATED AT 26TH STREET AND FLAMINGO ROAD ("NORTH" PARCEL #2 FOLIO 504013010246 AND "SOUTH" PARCEL #1 FOLIO 504024010321).

REPORT IN BRIEF: The Town of Davie is regarded as a leader in preservation of open space, trails and wishes to protect its wildlife and natural habitats and educate the public on the Florida Burrowing Owls. I personally observed and documented pairs of Florida Burrowing Owls, up to 5 burrows (nests) and 9 owls, on the North parcel #2 for a few years now along with members of the South Florida Audubon Society and Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission and presented the information and proposal to the Town Council May 21, 2008. This resolution authorizes the expenditure of District 3 Open Space Fund for the purpose of expeditiously installing owl friendly decorative PVC perimeter fence along the perimeter of the "North" Parcel 2 (Folio #504013010246) and "South" Parcel 1 (Folio #504024010321) located along the scenic corridor on the west side of Flamingo Road and 26th Street before the next nesting season and to create at least two artificial starter burrows as well as passive amenities and natural habitats. This fencing is consistent with the Town of Davie Scenic Flamingo Road Corridor and the Rural Lifestyle Development Regulations.

The Town of Davie desires to seek grants and partnerships with the South Florida Audubon Society (Project Perch), The Institute of Wildlife Sciences, Broward County Greenways and Trails, Ft. Lauderdale Flyways Cities Coalition, Naturescape Broward, local businesses and schools for the purpose of obtaining materials and to cover the costs

in funding the construction, preservation and education of and for our public on Town of Davie Burrowing Owls Project.

PREVIOUS ACTIONS: Town accepts by resolution Parcels as Open Space by the Florida Department of Transportation Resolution 1996-71; Town of Davie residents approved the Open Space Bond for \$25 million approved by Town Council Resolution 2005-288. Town Open Space Advisory Board supports the proposed expenditure on two occasions an recently on September 19, 2009; Town Council supports Councilwoman Starkey to place item on the agenda.

CONCURRENCES: This fencing is consistent with the Town of Davie Scenic Flamingo Road Corridor and the Rural Lifestyle Development Regulations.

FISCAL IMPACT: Yes

Has request been budgeted? No

If yes, expected cost:

Account name and number:

If no, amount needed: Fencing for Parcels 1 & 2 not to exceed \$30,000.00

What account name and number will funds be appropriated from:
District 3 Open Space Bond Fund # 030-3006-572-6503

Additional Comments:

Town staff has formally bid the decorative PVC Fence; this item will require a separate approval under another resolution submitted by the Public Works and Capital Projects Director.

RECOMMENDATION(S): Motion to approve resolution

Attachment(s): Resolution, Exhibit A: Owl Lookout Park Description, Exhibit B: Parcel Map, Exhibit C: Project Overview and Grant Proposal, Exhibit D: Audubon Support Letter, Exhibit E: Owl Park Sun Sentinel Article dated 5-21-2009

RESOLUTION _____

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF “OWLS LOOKOUT PARK,” AN OWL NATURE PRESERVE, LOCATED ON AN EXISTING OPEN SPACE PARCEL OWNED BY THE TOWN OF DAVIE; AND PROVIDING FOR AUTHORIZATION OF THE EXPENDITURE OF DISTRICT 3 OPEN SPACE FUNDING FOR THE INSTALLATION OF PERIMETER FENCING ON THE TWO PARCELS LOCATED AT 26TH STREET AND FLAMINGO ROAD (“NORTH” PARCEL #2 FOLIO 504013010246 AND “SOUTH” PARCEL #1 FOLIO 504024010321).

WHEREAS, and the Town of Davie currently owns two parcels of land located on the corner of Flamingo Road and Southwest 26th Street; The “North Parcel # 2” Folio #504013010246 and the “South Parcel # 1” Folio #504024010321. The two parcels were dedicated Open Space to the Town of Davie by the Florida Department of Transportation; and

WHEREAS, The Town of Davie, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation, and members of the South Florida Audubon Society have identified the “North Parcel” as having multiple burrowing owls habitats; and

WHEREAS, The Town of Davie, is regarded as a leader in preservation of open space, trails and wishes to protect its wildlife and natural habitats and educate the public on the Florida Burrowing Owls; and

WHEREAS, the Town recognizes the Florida Burrowing Owl as a “Species of Special Concern” by the State of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission in addition recognize their protective status under the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Davie desires to improve the “North” Parcel #2 Open Space into a passive owl nature preserve know as “OWLS LOOKOUT PARK” ; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Davie has designated Flamingo Road a scenic corridor and the Decorative PVC fencing is both consistent with the Town’s “Scenic Corridor” and “Rural lifestyle regulations” ; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Davie recognizes the two parcels referenced are located within the Town of Davie Trail System and the Broward County Greenway and Trail System; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF DAVIE, FLORIDA.

SECTION 1. That the Town of Davie will authorize the expenditure of District 3 Open Space Fund for the purpose of expeditiously installing owl friendly decorative PVC perimeter fencing the “North” Parcel #2 and “South” Parcel #1 located along the scenic corridor on the west side of Flamingo Road and 26th Street. (EXIBIT “B”)

SECTION 2. That the Town of Davie desires to seek grants and partnerships with the South Florida Audubon Society (Project Perch), The Institute of Wildlife Sciences, Broward County Greenways and Trails, Ft. Lauderdale Flyways Cities Coalition, Naturescape Broward, Local businesses and Schools for the purpose of obtaining materials and to cover the costs in funding the construction, preservation and education of and for our public on Town of Davie Burrowing Owls Project. (EXIBIT “C”)

SECTION 3. The Town of Davie desires to establish a passive “Owls Lookout Park” on North Parcel #2 and a passive trail head located on the South Parcel #1.

SECTION 4. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon its passage and adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS ____ DAY OF _____, 2009

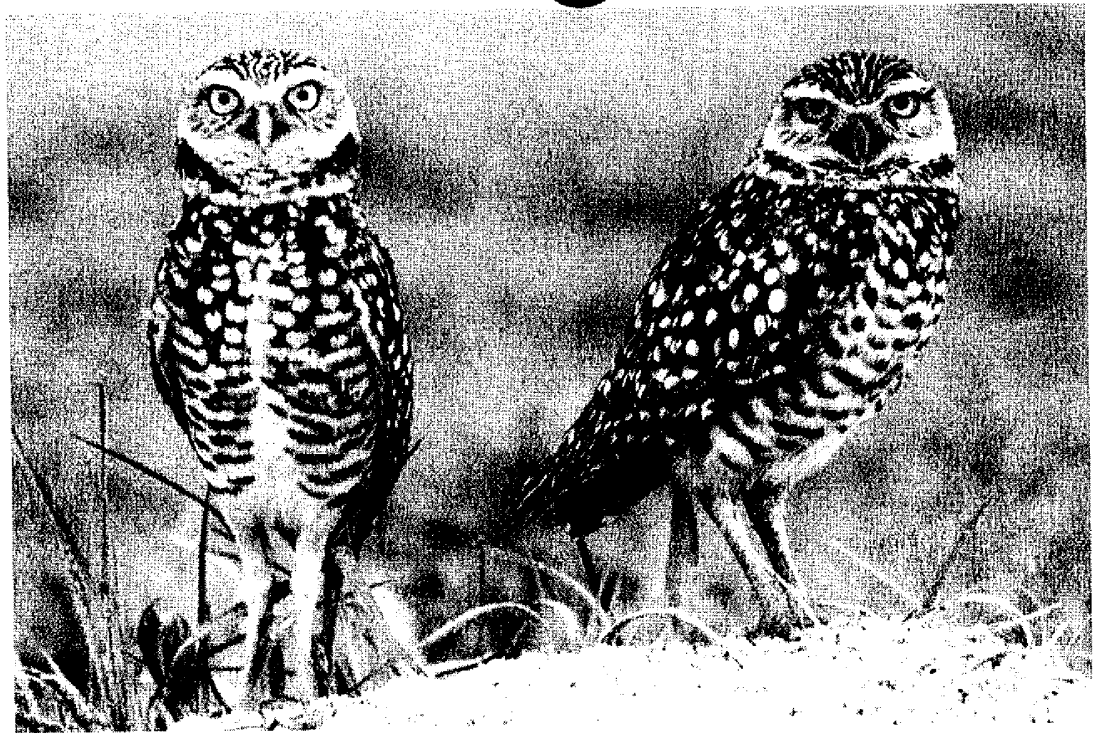
MAYOR/COUNCILMEMBER

ATTEST:

TOWN CLERK

APPROVED THIS ____ DAY OF _____, 2009

Give a hoot for burrowing owls



“Owls Lookout Park” District 3

Location: Open Space parcel at NE side of 26th Street and
Flamingo Road

By: Davie Councilwoman Susan Starkey
May 21, 2008

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APPENDICES:

Appendix A - FLUCFCS and Protected Species Survey Map

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Davie is located in the heart of Broward County and is regarded as a leader in the preservation of open space, trail and wishes to protect its wildlife. The Town Fire Chief and Town Administrator is proposing to relocate station 68 and build a NEW fire station at the Northeast Corner of SW 26th Street and Flamingo Road.

OBSERVATION:

Last year when discussion began regarding the proposed Fire Station relocation I drove by the site and noticed that there appeared to be One Florida Burrowing Owls (*Athene cunicularia floridana*) and a burrow which was identified.

On several occasions I saw two more owls (Nest 1). See site location Attachment 1. I notified the Town Administrator and staff at my scheduled council briefing. A PVC perch was installed at the site. However, I did not see the owls return to the burrow. Months had passed and I did not see the owls.

I discussed with members of the Open Space Advisory Committee some passive improvements to the parcel since it is located on the Broward County Greenway Trail System as well as the Town's Trail System and serves well as a Trail head.

About three months ago I noticed two owls had nested in the center of the parcel (Nest 2). I began documenting and photographing the owls. There were two other nests (Nest 3 & 4) but there did not appear to be any visible occupants. Every morning my daughter and husband would see the owls on there way to school the owls seemed to be safe in the middle of the open space parcel. Our evening bike rides would be to see the cows, horses and of course the two little owls.

To my disappointment, again the town began to discuss the Fire Station location at 26th Street. I was told that the Fire Chief would be requesting architectural services on the April 16 town council agenda for two proposed fire station. I began to research what should be done to protect the owls. I had been a member of Audubon and know a few members and contacted them. My husband contacted the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Committee (FWC).

To my delight I visited the site again and saw four owls at another location on the corner (NEST 5) and yet another on the opposite corner with two more owls. A total of 5 nests and 9 owls were seen at one time and photographed.

The next day FWC posted SIGN #1 at NEST 2, we called them the next day and informed the FWC of the additional owls and nest. They returned the following day and installed another sign SIGN #2 at NEST 5.

Audubon members contacted me and arranged to meet with me on Sunday May 17th.

5.0 DISCUSSION

A. The proposed site that is recommended for the replacements station 68 is inhabited by several burrowing owls, the habitat itself can be considered suitable and ideal for the owls due to its and existing Open Space Parcel of land which owned by the town.

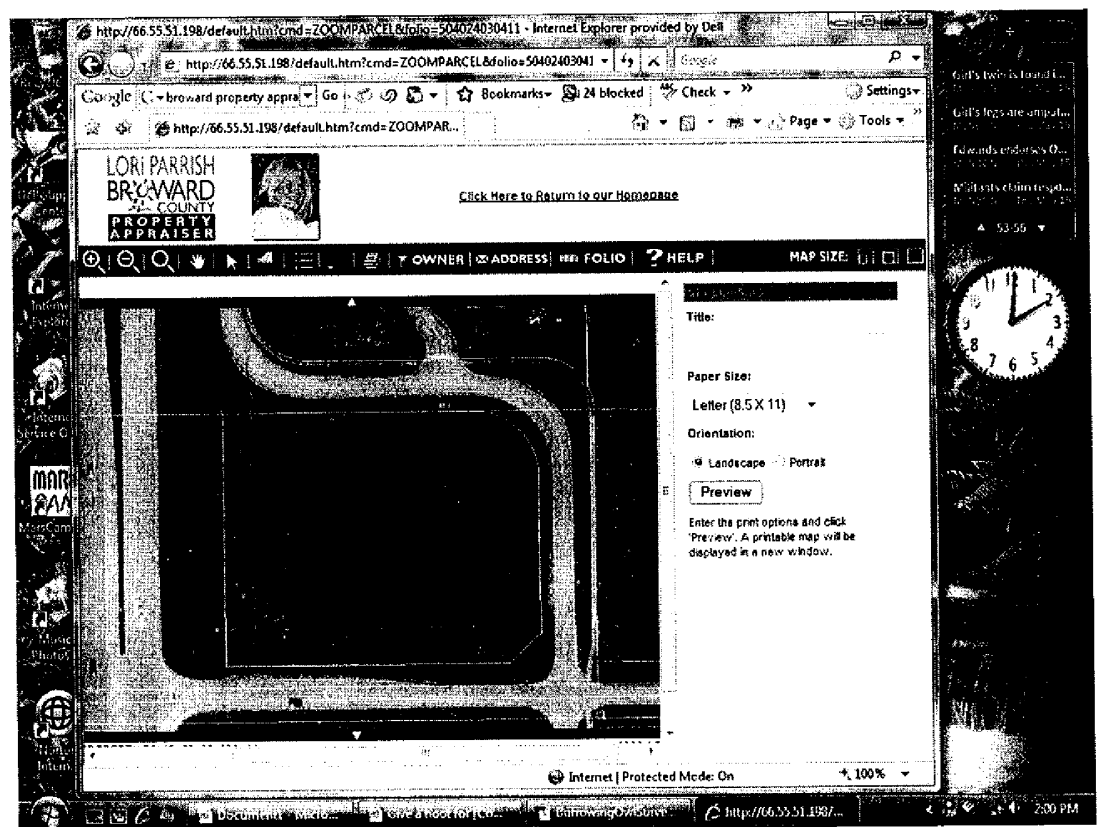
Fish and Wildlife Commission has posted the necessary WARNING signs at the site. The burrowing owl is one of the smallest species of Florida owls and is listed as Species of Special Concern by the FWC and and therefore should not be disturbed.

Any damage or destruction to burrowing owl nests is prohibited without an Incidental Take Permit issued by FWC. FWC will only permit the destruction of inactive burrows (burrows containing no eggs or flightless young) as a last resort. Burrows can generally be considered inactive from July 10th to February 15th (non-nesting season). Between February 15th and July 10th (nesting season), burrows containing adult owls are considered active nests unless information suggesting that all young owls have fledged from the nest has been collected.

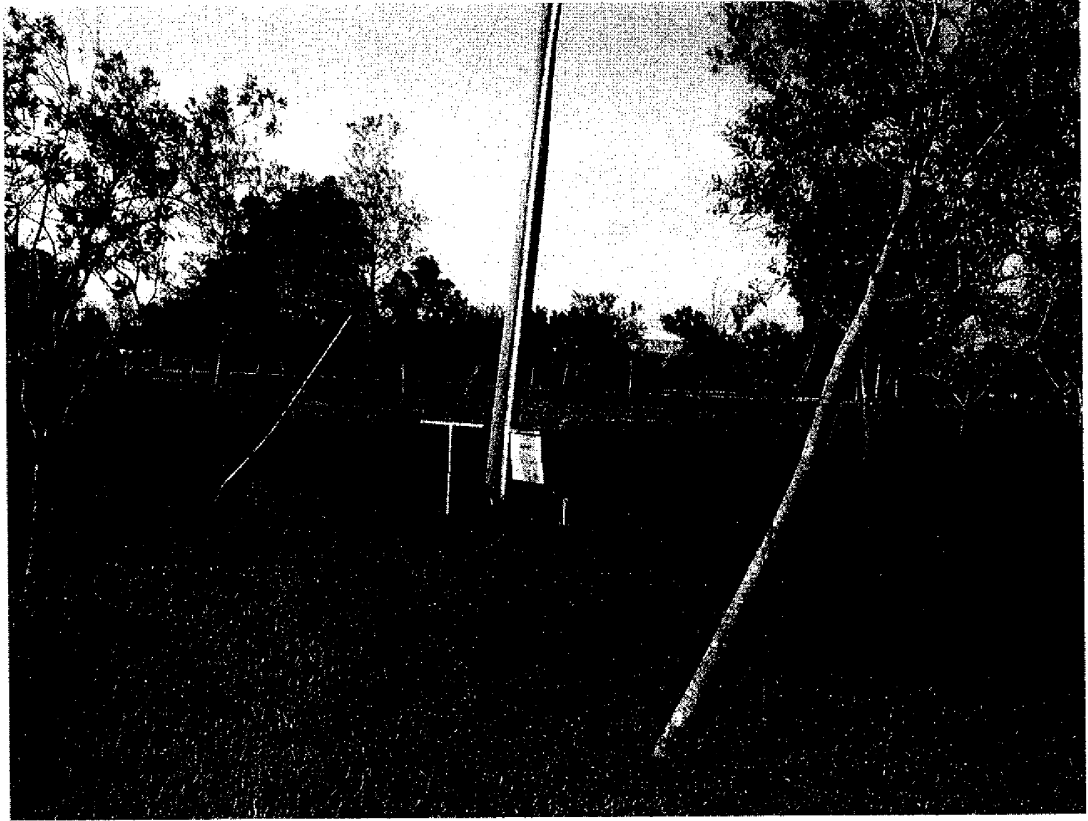
ACTION REQUESTED:

The Town should order a Protected Species Survey for the site, in accordance with methodologies outlined by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

Do not consider this site for the proposed fire station. Maintain the site as open space and improve only as a passive park for preservation and observation and enjoyment of the owls.



Site location map Flamingo Road and 26th Street ~ North east corner

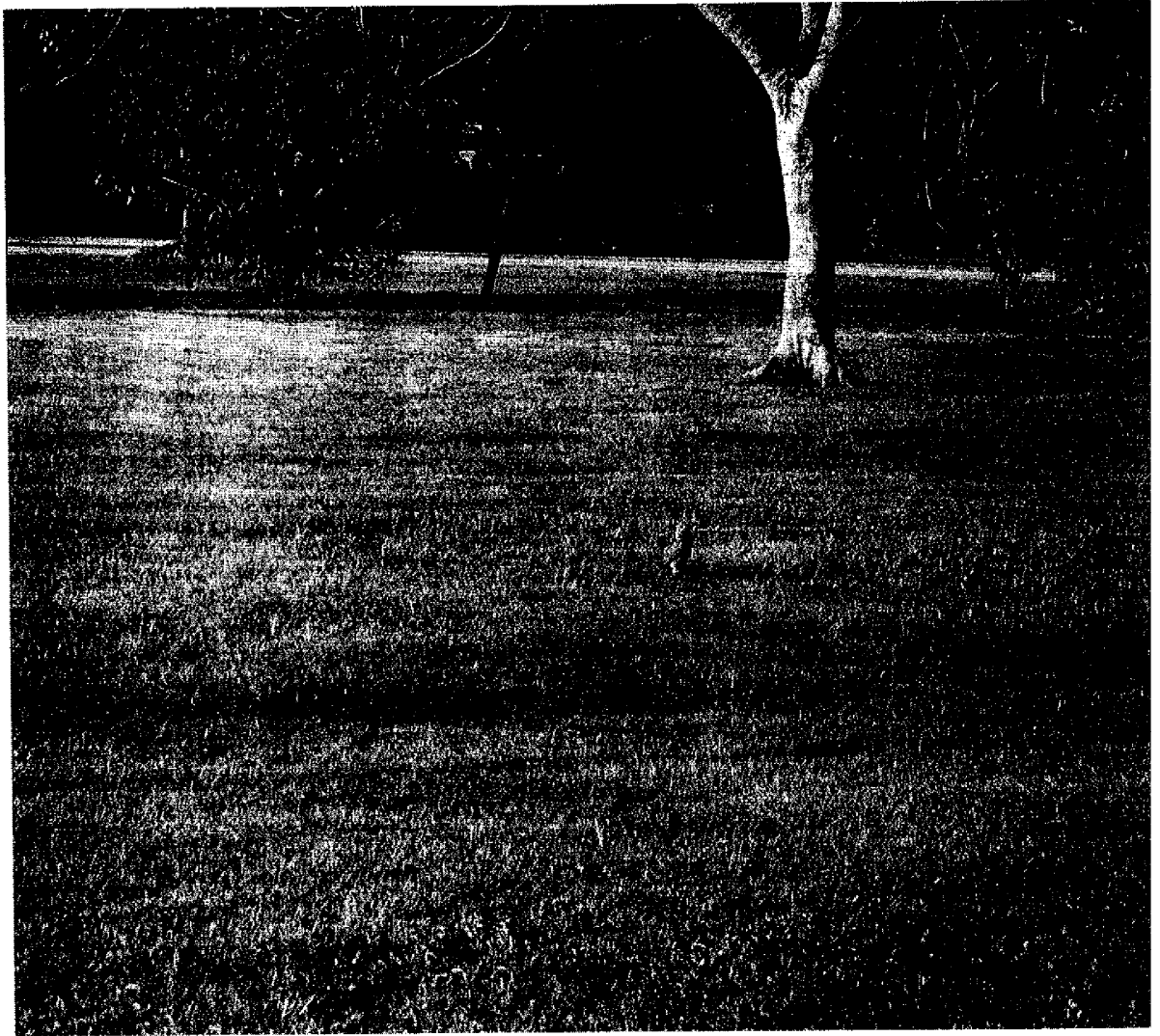


NEST # 1

Last year when discussion began regarding the proposed Fire Station relocation I drove by the site and noticed the appearance of One Florida Burrowing Owl (*Athene cunicularia floridana*) and a burrow which was identified.

On several occasions I saw two owls (Nest 1). I notified the Town Administrator and staff at my scheduled council briefing. A PVC perch was installed at the site. However, I did not see the owls return to the burrow. Months had passed and I did not see the owls.

I discussed with members of the Open Space Advisory Committee some passive improvements to this Open Space parcel owned by the town since it is located on the Broward County Greenway Trail System as well as the Town's Trail System and serves well as a Trail head.



NEST #2

March 2008

About three months ago I noticed two owls had nested in the center of the parcel. I began documenting and photographing the owls. And began researching what could be done to protect the owls. I contacted the Local and State Audubon and the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. (FWC).

The burrowing owl is one of the smallest species of Florida owls not bigger than nine inches and is listed as Species of Special Concern by the State Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Burrowing owls are also protected by the federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act therefore should not be disturbed.



NEST #3

There were two other nests (Nest 3 & 4) but there did not appear to be any visible occupants. Every morning my daughter and husband would see the owls on their way to school. The owls seemed to be safe in the middle of the open space parcel. Our evening bike rides would be to see the cows, horses and of course the two little owls.

NEST #4

Research has show that these little critters like to adorn their burrows with various rocks, snakes, and other items to attract insects into the burrow for their young. Between February 15th and July 10th (nesting season), burrows containing adult owls are considered active nests.



NEST # 2

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) installed the first sign in May 2008 at NEST #2. You can see the one owl behind the sign. The Burrow (Nest) is just to the right.

Sign reads; "Molesting Owls or Their Nest is a Crime"



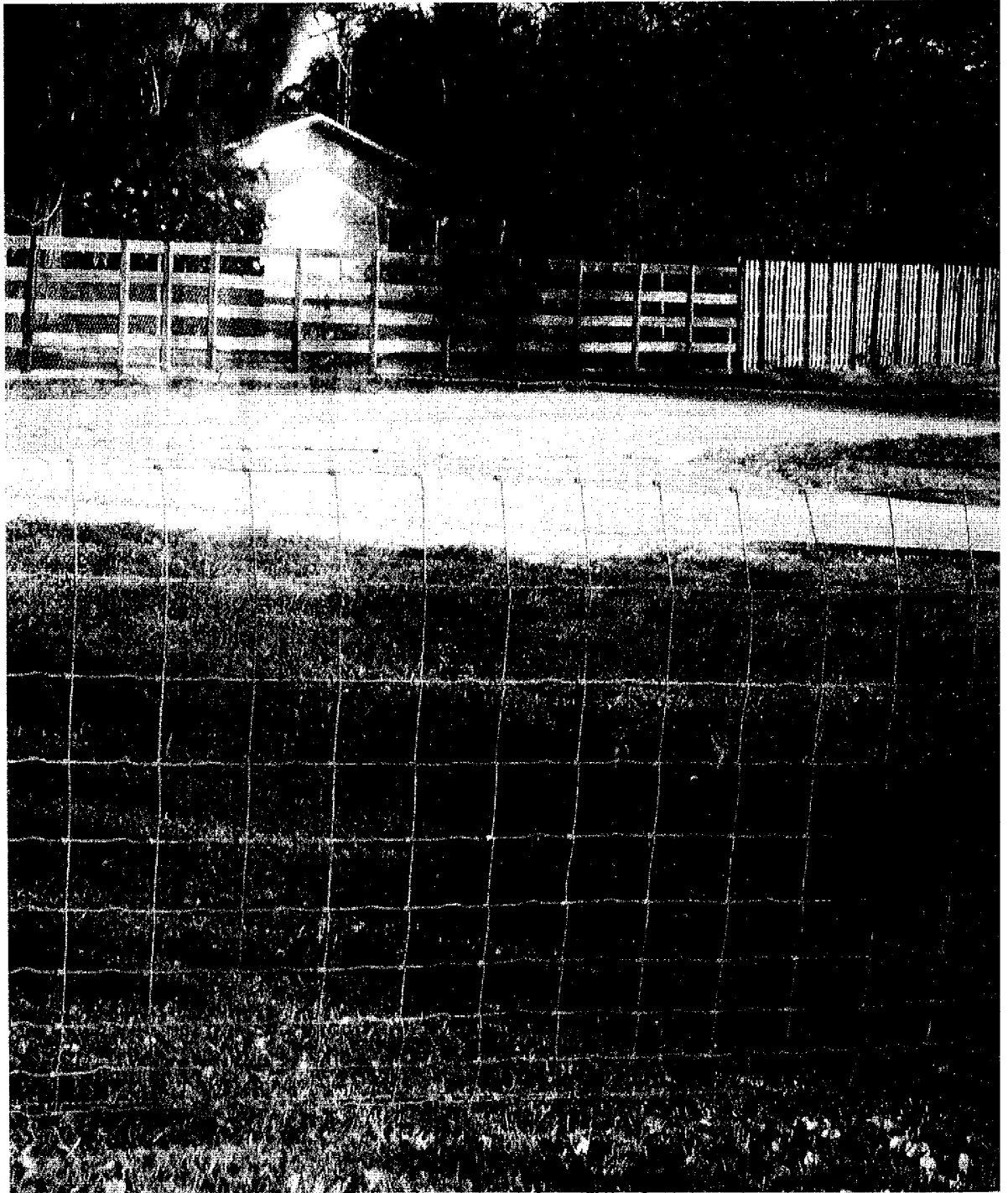
After contacting the FWC a sign is now posted at the center burrow. Two owls are usually at that site.



NEST #5

To my delight I visited the site again and saw four owls at another location on the corner NEST #5 and yet another on the opposite corner with two more owls. A total of 5 nests and 9 owls were seen at one time and photographed.

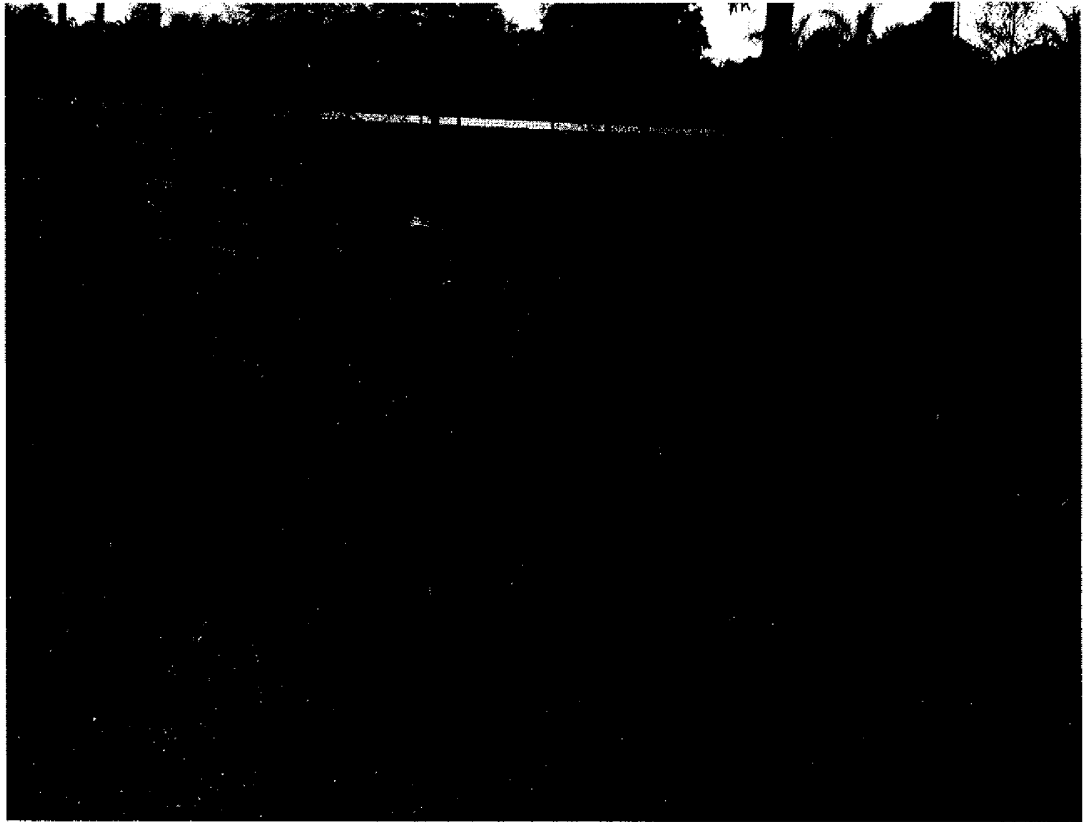




SE Corner of 26 Street Site by the stop sign. The burrow has between 4 to 6 Owls at a time, this picture shows three.



The Owl site across from the Open Space Parcel, is borrow below the Weekley sign usually two owls at this site. They fly back and forth from this site and the one located at the stop sign.



The Owls are usually observed around sunrise and sundown. This is three at the site NEST #5

Another sign was installed by FWCC at this corner.

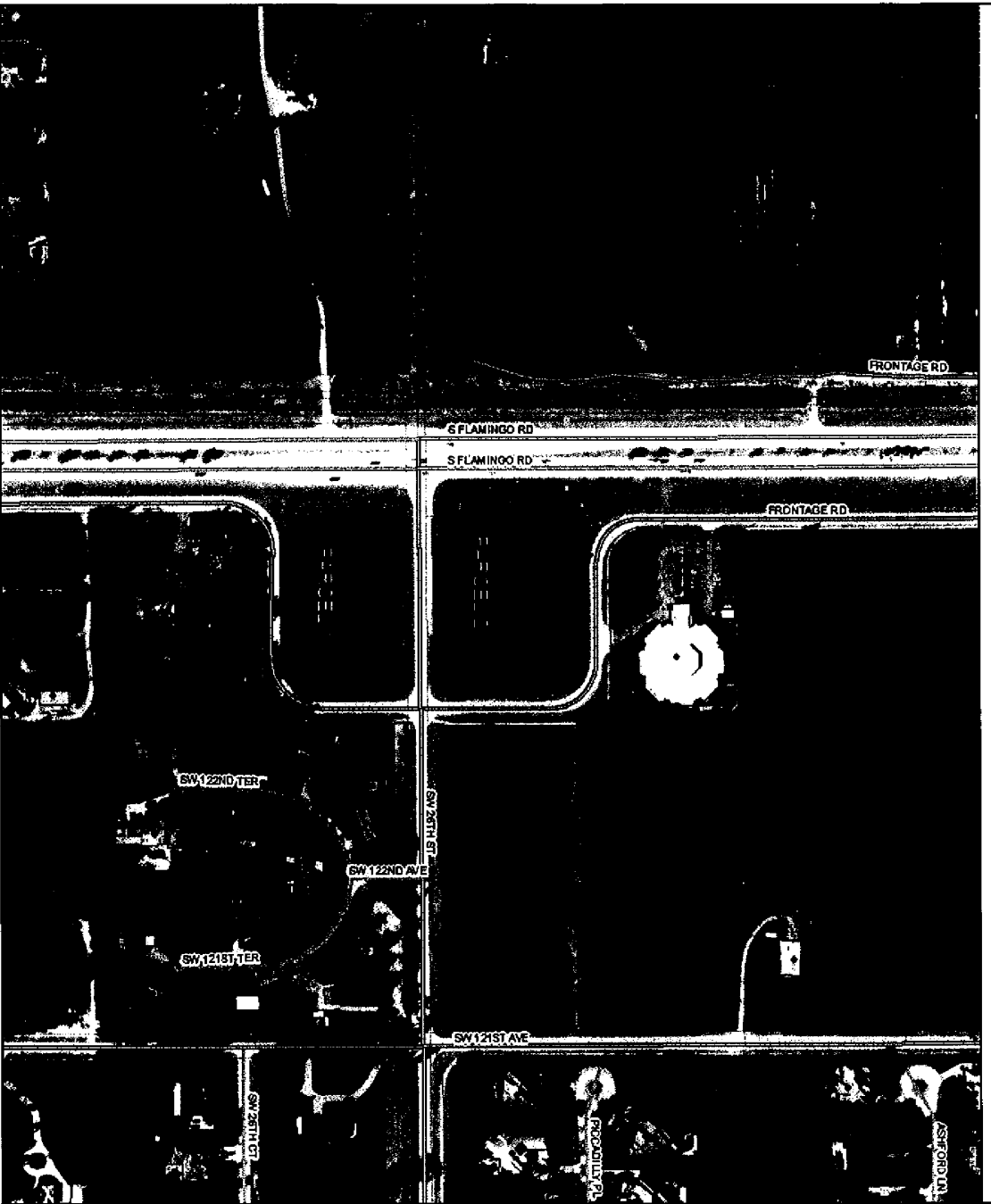
A total of 5 nests and 9 owls were seen at one time and photographed. As recently as Sunday, May 18, 2008 I visited the site with members of Broward Audubon.

In closing, I believe that this is a very special place in the Town and District 3 and I would ask the Mayor and the Council Members to permit staff and I to :

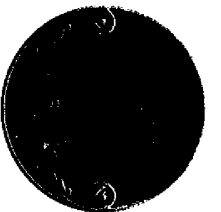
- 1) Order a wildlife survey be done on the site.
- 2) Maintain the site as open space and improve only as a passive park for preservation and protection and observation of the owls. Naming it "OWLS LOOKOUT PARK
- 3) Begin a "Save the Owl Project" for the site similar to one that has been adopted by volunteer groups in other cities like Cape Coral. This will serve to educate the public on the Florida Burrowing Owls, how to protect, attract and properly observe them.

Preserve this parcel as Open Space and to protect the Little Owls that live there. I would like to work with some sponsors to create a safe environment for the owls that will be enjoyed by our residents and their children. I have researched and have a few ideas for the site. I will bring more to you later on this I will pass down some information to see in my notebook with some of the ideas.

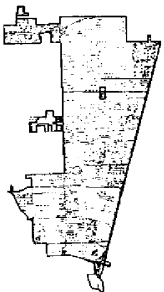
26 Street Parcels



GIS MAP DISCLAIMER
 The information on this map is for graphical purposes only. It does not represent a legal survey and has not been prepared or is it suitable for legal, engineering, or surveying purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure that these data are accurate and reliable the Town of Davie cannot assume liability for any damages caused by any errors or omissions in the data.



- Address points
- Stroke
- DEDICATION, OWNERSHIP
- PRIVATE ROAD: PRIVATE, LOCAL, OWNED
- PUBLIC, OWNER NOT SPECIFIED
- PUBLIC, COUNTY OWNED
- PUBLIC, LOCAL OWNED
- PUBLIC, STATE OWNED
- DEDICATION NOT LISTED
- DEDICATION NEEDS VERIFICATION
- Right of Way
- Buildings Data
- Town Boundary
- Water Features
- Parks



Background: Susan Starkey, Councilwoman in Davie is working on a project to convert the two Open Space parcels that the town currently owns at Flamingo Road and South 26th Street into “Owls Lookout Park”, a multi-purpose park for the town of Davie. The northeast corner has been home to at least 2 pair of Florida Burrowing owls for several years. The park will include more trees, butterfly garden, perimeter fence, picnic tables, seating, educational signs and a viewing platform from which people can enjoy the owls from a safe distance. Earlier in the project, the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (“FFWCC”) was asked and documented the owls present, installing signs near the active burrows. The town then installed PVC perches. The South Florida Audubon Society’s (“SFAS”) Director of Wildlife Policy and Conservation Chair was asked and documented 9 Burrowing owls on the property.

At Starkey’s request, SFAS’s Project Perch in partnership with the Institute for Wildlife Sciences (“IWS”) visited the property, reviewed the project to ensure the changes proposed would better protect the owls and provide for their future use of the their habitat. On September 23 and 30, 2009 , Kelly Heffernan, Avian Biologist from Project Perch and Brian Mealey, Executive Director of the IWS met with Susan Starkey and Tim Lee.

Several issues specific to the owls were discussed. (1) One owl burrow is located near the stop sign at the edge of the property, outside the current fence. This burrow is very close to car traffic. (2) The landscape maintenance workers use herbicides to keep the areas around the light poles, fenceline and utility boxes free from weeds and some of the burrows are located there. Herbicides were even being applied to the signs and burrow entrances. (3) Burrows had been collapsed by large lawn mowers and the perches and signs present an obstacle for the large lawn maintenance equipment. (4) The park will have a new perimeter fence. Currently, the fence is only on 2 sides facing Flamingo Road and South 26th Street. The burrow near the stop sign is within 50 feet of the old fence and so protecting the owls during the installation of the new fence and the proper permitting would be required.

Purpose: To build 2 new artificial burrows with nest boxes and 2 satellite burrows. (1) A primary goal will be to install an artificial burrow specifically located towards the interior of the property to passively attract the owls away from the road. (2) Another goal will be to provide burrows that are compatible with large lawn equipment so that there are no maintenance issues. (3) The burrows will be installed in open lawn and not near light poles, fencing or electrical boxes to avoid the application of herbicides at the burrow entrances, and (4) to move the signs onto the perimeter fence and remove the perches so there is no reason to apply herbicides at the burrow entrance.

New Perimeter Fence: A PVC split rail fence is proposed, which is a very open, owl friendly design that will provide plenty of perches. It is a significant improvement over the existing 4" square wire fence that is on just 2 sides. By adding a perimeter fence, the owls will be better protected from all kinds of traffic but most importantly ATVs, motorbikes and equestrians. The artificial burrows will be installed at least 60 feet in

from the perimeter fence. When the fence is replaced, a permit may be required, see below.

Artificial Burrow Site:

The open area underneath the utility lines, on the southern side of the northern parcel, where the owls have been historically burrowing. The burrows will be installed in open areas, and will be located at least 60 feet in from the perimeter fence. The artificial burrows will not be located near any active burrows nor any abandoned burrows, that the owls could return to in the future. The installation of the artificial burrows will be done outside of owls' nesting season which is February 15 – July 15.

Artificial Burrow Design: The artificial nest boxes will be constructed of plastic utility boxes. The box will be cut to accommodate a 3-4 feet run of 6" PVC Pipe. A portion of the PVC pipe will be removed so that the owls have dirt under their talons. There will also be 2 satellite tunnels installed, a 3 foot piece of 6" PVC with the bottom removed. The turf will be cut and pulled back, the burrows dug, nest boxes and PVC pipes buried and the turf replaced on top.

Trees, Butterfly Garden, Viewing Area, Seating and Picnic Tables: The trees and butterfly garden will be planted near a stand of already existing trees that are located on the other end of the parcel and should not interfere with the owls use of the property. The viewing area would be located in the shade, under the trees and would be several hundred feet from the owl burrows. Picnic tables and seating will be located in the available shade on the other parcel and should not interfere with the owls use of the property and should attract people away from the owls.

Educational Signs: The signs will be modeled after the educational signs currently used at Flamingo Gardens which is just down the street. After the new perimeter fence is installed, the current FFWCC signs will be relocated to appropriate places on the fence nearest the burrows. Brian Mealey and Kelly Heffernan can assist the town with educational material for the signs.

Permits Required: We confirmed with Ricardo Zambrano, Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) that no permitting is required for the artificial burrows. However, if the removal and installation of the fence is done within nesting season and is within 50 feet of a burrow, and if the machinery or the time involved is likely to disturb the owls or their burrows then a permit should be requested from FFWCC.

Technical Guidance: Brian Mealey from the Institute of Wildlife Sciences will provide avian consultation with respect to the owls. He will donate 100% of his time to this project, including his initial visit. The consultation fee is typically \$100 per burrow, plus supplies and labor. That includes finding suitable habitat, building the artificial

burrows and monitoring the owls' movements. Brian Mealey can also serve as the environmental consultant listed on the permit, if a permit is required to replace the fence and that fee would be \$200.

Volunteer Hours: All other parties will donate their time, Project Perch, the students and volunteers that make the artificial burrows and dig the burrows. All volunteer hours will be tracked. We estimate the project to take between 40 and 60 volunteer hours.

Funds Needed:

Avian Consultation contribution)	\$200.00 (in-kind
Environmental Consulting for Permit	200.00 (if needed)
Educational Signs	300.00
2 Utility Boxes	50.00
4 Burrows: 30' of 6" PVC	78.99
Play Sand	11.04
Various (Gatorade for Volunteers, Changes in Prices)	25.00
Total Estimated Cost	<u>\$665.03</u>

If supplies can be donated or obtained through the town, that would lower the project cost. Also, the town may be able to use their own vendor to print signs. Once the proposal is approved, then grant applications can be made to secure funding needed for this part of the project. There would be several grants the project is eligible for including the Audubon Society's Together Green Grants and the Ft. Lauderdale Flyways Coalition Mini Grants.

Entities Involved:

Town of Davie (Susan Starkey, Councilwoman)
Project Perch (Kelly Heffernan)
Institute of Wildlife Sciences (Brian Mealey)
South Florida Audubon Society (Doug Young, Grant Campbell and Arthur Nelson)
Ft. Lauderdale Flyways Coalition (Diana Guidry)
McArthur High School's Ecology Club (Available to construct the burrows)
Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (Ricardo Zambrano)

Volunteer Hours Tracked:

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Hours:</u>
September 24 & 30, 2009 Initial Meetings	4 (Brian & Kelly)
Writing Grant, E-Mails, Phone Calls	2 (Kelly)

Total Hours: 6

Importance of this Project: This is the first town project that has focused on the owls' habitat requirements with the primary goal of ensuring their continued use of the area. The park will treat the owls as a natural resource, better protect them and provide education to visitors about the uniqueness of the Florida Burrowing owl and its lifecycle. By installing artificial burrows compatible with large lawn equipment another goal is to eliminate maintenance issues including the application of herbicides. The perimeter fence will eliminate ATV, motorbike and equestrian traffic. This is a great opportunity for the town of Davie to demonstrate their stewardship of the Florida Burrowing owl, a species of special concern, and a fantastic opportunity for all of the organizations involved.



P.O. Box 9644
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33310-9644
954-776-5585
email: warbler@browardaudubon.org
Web site: www.southfloridaaudubon.org

South Florida Audubon Society fosters conservation through local, regional, national and global environmental advocacy and activities throughout South Florida, with an emphasis on birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

Executive Committee

Doug Young, MES
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Justin Freedman
Vice-President
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Treasurer
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Grant Campbell
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Steve Holmes
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Dan Warren
Dave Weinberg

Susan Starkey
Councilwoman
Town of Davie
6591 Orange Drive
Davie, FL 33314

November 2, 2009

The South Florida Audubon Society is writing this letter in support of "Owls Lookout Park", a project to create a park out of the two Open Space parcels at Flamingo Road and South 26th Street that the town currently owns. For the past several years there have been at least 2 pair of Florida Burrowing owls, a species of special concern, nesting on the northeast parcel. South Florida is constantly developing and in the process, reducing the habitat available for wildlife like the Florida Burrowing owl. Preserving their habitat is paramount to their survival and that is one of the goals of this new park.

As part of the project, the owls are to be better protected with a full perimeter fence. Also, a viewing area with educational signs will be installed so the owls can be viewed from a safe distance. One of the main goals of the park is to ensure the owl's continued use of this habitat. With this park, the Town of Davie will be a leader in their stewardship of the Florida Burrowing owl.

We will assist this project in applying for and obtaining donated materials or additional grants to cover any costs associated with the owls. This is a great project, with the full support of the South Florida Audubon Society.

Grant Campbell
South Florida Audubon Society
Dir. of Wildlife Policy/Conservation Chair

Doug Young
South Florida Audubon Society
President

Cc: Kelly Heffernan, Project Perch
Brian Mealey, The Institute of Wildlife Sciences

DAVIE DILEMMA IN DAVIE

OWLS MAY EXTINGUISH FIRE STATION PLAN, 3B



BULLETIN BOARD 2 • COMMUNITY NEWS 4-5 • OBITUARIES 10-11

STATION EDITOR DANA BANKER, 954-356-4681, dbanker@sun-sentinel.com

DAVIE officials questions if council gives a hoot

Protected owls may stand in way of new fire station

BY SUSANNAH BRYAN
STAFF WRITER

DAVIE • A small colony of birds may block the town's plans to build a new fire station on Flamingo Road.

Nine burrowing owls make their home on the 2-acre parcel. The birds are federally protected and listed as a "species of special concern."

"Let's see if the Town Council gives a hoot," said Councilwoman Susan Starkey, who has counted five nests on the site this year.

Council members are set to discuss at 7 tonight plans for two new fire stations, including the station proposed for the owls' nesting site at Flamingo Road and Southwest 26th Street.

Fire officials want to build there because the town already owns the land, cutting construction costs. Critics object, saying town officials promised to preserve the site as open space.

Signs designate the area as a protected site of the burrowing owl. It is illegal to harm a burrowing owl, its nest or its eggs. Under state law, the town would need a permit to build on owl grounds.

Starkey would like to preserve the site as a passive park and name it "Owls Lookout Park" for the birds that nest there every February to July.

"I do not think it's appropriate to take open space that is a wildlife habitat to build a public facility that exists three blocks away," she said.

Town officials face a financial dilemma as well.

The town has already spent \$10 million of a \$16.5 million bond approved in 2003. The bond issue promised voters two new fire stations and a new station to replace an aging facility at 3600 Flamingo Road. A station serving the east side of town opened last year, but residents are still waiting on the other two. Now town officials must decide how to spend the remaining \$6.5 million.

Davie needs at least \$7 million to build two fire stations. The station in the Shenandoah neighborhood would cost \$3.8 million. The station on Flamingo Road would cost \$3.2 million. Neither estimate includes land costs.

Fire Chief Joe Montopoli has suggested rebuilding the station on Flamingo Road first, partly because the town doesn't have the money to staff a new station. Staffing would cost about \$3 million the first year, he said.

Town Council members are set to discuss new fire stations tonight.